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**2009.27**



# **Transitional Labour Markets, from theory to policy application. Can transitional labour markets contribute to a less traditional gender division of labour?**

Janine LESCHKE<sup>\*</sup>, Maria JEPSEN<sup>♦</sup>

## **Abstract**

Much of the gender inequality in the labour market is brought about by women's dual role as worker and (potential) carer. In this regard transitional arrangements can contribute to mitigate the risks associated with parenthood and to distribute risks more equally. This paper looks at these issues in light of the transitional labour market (TLM) concept. The first section discusses various gender-equality models which imply different ways of organising, for example, childcare, parental leave and flexible working time. Sections two and three look at gender inequalities in labour market outcomes and discuss transitional arrangements that can contribute to the achievement of more gender equality in six countries taken as examples. The last section discusses the results of the labour market and institutional analysis in light of the TLM concept.

Key words: gender, labour market, transitional labour markets, childcare, parental leave, flexible working time

Titre : *Les marchés transitionnels du travail, de la théorie à la pratique. Les marchés transitionnels du travail peuvent-ils contribuer à une division sexuée du travail moins traditionnelle ?*

## **Résumé**

La plupart des inégalités de genre sur le marché du travail sont dues au rôle dual rempli par la femme en tant que travailleuse et (potentielle) pourvoyeuse de soins. A cet égard, des dispositions transitionnelles peuvent contribuer à atténuer les risques associés à la parentalité et à répartir ceux-ci de manière plus équitable. Ce document examine ces questions à la lumière du concept de marché transitionnel du travail (MTT). La première section aborde les divers modèles d'égalité professionnelle. Les sections deux et trois étudient les inégalités de genre ainsi que les mesures « transitionnelles » pouvant contribuer à la réalisation d'une plus grande égalité entre hommes et femmes, dans six pays sélectionnés. La dernière section traite des résultats de l'analyse du marché du travail et des institutions à la lumière du concept MTT.

Mots clés : genre, marché du travail, marchés transitionnels du travail, garde des enfants, congé parental, temps de travail flexible.

JEL classification : J08, J16, J38

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## **Introduction**

The gender perspective is crucial within the transitional labour market (TLM) concept, at least in regard to two areas where transitions can take place, namely, at the interface between employment and private households and within employment. In both areas transitional arrangements (e.g. institutions) can increase the possibilities for supporting “atypical” career paths and can thereby contribute to more equal gender outcomes.

Much of the gender inequality in the labour market (e.g. lower employment and wages, higher part-time employment, more frequent (downward) transitions) is brought about by women’s dual role as worker and (potential) carer. In this constellation, women are penalised for combining unpaid and paid work in terms of income, social security and career development, while men are not (sufficiently) stimulated by economic and social incentives to take over household activities in a manner that would contribute to a more equal distribution of labour market risks and opportunities. This situation leads also to overall welfare penalties on society, for example in the form of declining fertility rates and increasing skill deficits.

There exists, accordingly, an abundance of reasons to create and implement transitional arrangements that would mitigate the risks of parenthood and to distribute risks more equally between men and women. These transitional arrangements can be brought about either by the state or by employers. Examples are encompassing care infrastructures, generous and universal wage replacement and pension entitlement credits in case of parental leave, flexible working time arrangements, and incentives for men to participate more equally in household and care work – for instance take-it-or-leave-it paternity leave.

The question this paper aims to clarify is how the TLM concept can contribute to building the institutional framework that can progressively transform the current ‘parity caregiver’ and ‘universal breadwinner’ models into a ‘universal caregiver’ model.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first section briefly discusses various gender equality models which imply different ways of organising, for example, child-care, parental leave and flexible working time. It then relates the discussion on gender equality to the TLM concept. Sections two and three look at gender inequalities in labour market outcomes and discuss transitional arrangements in work as well as between private households and employment that can contribute to the achievement of more gender equality. To this end six countries are taken as examples, namely Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy. These correspond, as will be shown in section 4, with different models of gender division of labour. The fourth section brings these elements together and draws some preliminary conclusions. The concluding section discusses the results of the labour market and institutional analysis in light of the TLM concept.

## **1. Gendering TLM**

### **1.1 The gender equality dilemma**

Before embarking on the interlinks between the TLM concept and gender equality,

the dilemma that is connected with the issue of gender equality, or rather inequality, needs to be clarified. Put briefly, it consists in the incompatibility between the claim for equality and the quest for the right to be different. In the first case, there is an implicit striving towards equality with men; in the second case, there is a striving for the right to be different in terms of attributes, capacities, and activities and for re-evaluation of these attributes and their acknowledgement as valuable (Paterman, 1992 cited in Borchorst 2008). A long strand of feminist literature has discussed this dilemma, claiming, among other things, that the dilemma reflects the inadequacy of the state and market to deal with social reproduction, and that the debate surrounding the dilemma constitutes a trap intended to obscure other solutions to the achievement of gender equality. The consensus is, however, that the dilemma is a driving force in the construction of the gendered division of care and breadwinning, and that it is a framing element in the construction of institutions and processes dealing with women and paid employment.

In Fraser (1997) the gender equality dilemma is criticised and re-conceptualised. The main argument is that there are different roads to achieving gender equality, the essential difference between which relates to their organisation of care work. Accordingly, the attempts of feminists to define gender equality can be grouped into three visions or models. The *universal breadwinner model* implies that family care work is brought to the market and/or the state; it hence promotes the vision of women taking on the same role as men, namely that of breadwinner. In the *caregiver parity model*, care work remains within the family but is acknowledged and re-valued. In this model the gender division is preserved but it becomes costless in terms of lost income deriving from paid work since public funding is foreseen (e.g. caregiver allowance). In the *universal caregiver model*, the life course pattern of women becomes the pattern of both men and women. It thereby redefines the gender contract into one based on shared roles in both care and breadwinning. Through the 1980s and 1990s the universal caregiver model was steadily accorded credit as coming closest to how gender equality might be understood in contemporary society.

Each of the above defined models leads to very different ways of organising, for example, childcare, parental leave and flexible working time. Empirically, these concepts will most often co-exist within the same country (compare Borschorst 2008). A careful analysis of the gender dimension of discourse and social provisions will, in most European Union member states, display one predominant vision of how to organise gender equality, embedded in a mix of the three logics.

In Crompton and Le Feuvre (2000) the gender division of labour is theorised along a continuum and this provides a framework for analysing different policy options based on the three gender equality models presented above (Table 1).

**Table 1: Gendered division of labour**

Caregiver parity model		Universal breadwinner model	Universal caregiver model
Male breadwinner/ female carer	Dual earner/ female part-time carer	Dual earner/substitute carer (state or market)	Dual earner/dual carer

Source: Authors' table based on Crompton and Le Feuvre (2000) and Fraser (1997).

In the cell on the far left, we find the traditional male breadwinner/female carer model which used to be the dominant picture in Europe until the 1960s. The second cell represents a modified and more modern version of the caregiver parity model where the breadwinner is complemented by a part-time earner/part-time carer. The third cell from the left illustrates the gender pattern where the state or the market take over care functions and thus allow both men and women to participate fully in the labour

market. The cell to the far right depicts the dual earner/dual carer model which is currently not observed in any European Union country.

Another important element is the distribution of the different types of flexibility across gender, in particular working-time flexibility. Women's entry to the labour market has predominantly taken place via part-time employment, a situation from which women have found it hard to escape. Female employment is thus, to a certain extent and with strong variation between European countries, seen as an addition to their unpaid (care) work and as a supplement to the household income (Lewis 2003; Kurean 1999). When jobs have been qualified as *better* for women, this has often meant in terms of the possibilities to combine work and family, with the focus being very much on women alone. As discussed above, the policy measures put in place to distribute care between the family, market and state are based on a political and social construct; part-time and full-time work, likewise, cannot be considered natural constructs, for this distinction in itself represents a social construct closely related to the different visions of the gender contract. The distribution of flexibility, as well as the general labour market participation of women, reflects their role in the household; they take up jobs that enable them to combine paid and unpaid work (Gustafson *et al.* 2003).

Hence, in most European Union member states, there have been reactions to the need for women to combine work and care. The resulting strategies, however, are heavily influenced by the differing roles attributed by each culture to women within the family and on the labour market. The underlying models have thus shaped discourses and policy solutions.

## 1.2 TLM and gender (in)equality

Transitional labour markets are organisational bridges that facilitate and secure transitions between different forms of employment, working-time arrangements and private activities such as childcare or education, in a way that avoids enduring sub-standard employment or social exclusion. Transitional labour markets thereby aim to contribute to enhanced flexibility and better employment outcomes by allowing socially insured transitions between different areas (private households, employment, education, unemployment and retirement) (Schmid 2002: 175-204). The areas that are relevant in the framework of this paper are transitions between private households and employment, and transitions within employment (for example between part-time and full-time work).

Transitional labour markets are characterised by a combination of employment and other useful social activities and by a combination of income sources (e.g. wages and transfer payments). Discontinuous employment trajectories resulting not only from labour market failures but also from private decisions stand at the centre of this approach. Transitional labour markets acknowledge increasing flexibility in employment forms, as well as more differentiated employment trajectories, and aim at cushioning the resulting breaks and shortcomings through a range of security measures in the form of legally, collectively or privately contracted entitlements. In setting up and providing the security measures, the gender dimension of TML becomes very visible as the institutions and incentives will reflect the different visions of the gendered division of labour as described in Section 1.1.

The research making the link between the TLM concept and gender has so far placed the focus on effects and outcomes of institutions and policies, rather than on

conceptualising the TLM from a gender perspective. The papers have mainly dealt with transitions between private household and employment, the domestic division of labour and flexible working hours (compare the literature review in de Gier and van den Berg 2005 and Gazier 2008). Several conclusions that are relevant for the shaping of the TLM concept have emerged from this research. Firstly, institutions and policies do matter in shaping women's labour market participation and working time. In this regard, questions have been raised and suggestions have been put forward as to what kind of provisions should be considered in order to facilitate female labour market participation and distribute the risks associated with care more equally. Secondly, the research has also drawn attention to the importance of the negotiated nature of working time and the need to empower individuals in order to ensure "good" working-time transitions. Furthermore, the research has served to emphasise that it is very likely that new inequalities, unintended by the policy-makers, will occur with the appearance of new transitions, and that it is important to understand what influence a decision taken at a specific point in time will have on the further life course.

Schmid (2001, 2006 and 2008) conceptualise the gender aspect of TLM while clearly displaying an evolution with regard to the manner in which the link is made. In Schmid (2001) the focus is on how the TLM concept can secure and reshape the transitions that women face in relation to parenthood. However, no consideration is given to the facts that women and men do not have the same starting point on the labour market and that they have different bargaining power when negotiating these transitions. Hence a criticism from a gender equality perspective would be that, while transitions may be better protected within the TLM framework, such an approach may serve to reinforce the existing gender gaps rather than narrow them down. In response to this criticism, Schmid (2006) and (2008: 295-299) discuss how the risks of parenthood can be shared more equally between men and women; here the crucial aspect of collectively provided solutions is brought to the fore, as is the need to bind men (for example by way of incentives) to the task of care.

Two other streams of literature are closely linked to the TLM debates on gender; namely the life-course literature not further dealt with here (compare e.g. Anxo and Erhel 2006) and the literature on flexicurity in regard to gender, the conclusions of which in many ways resemble those of the TLM discussions.

Flexicurity is in some cases argued to be a way of promoting and achieving work-life balance (see, for example, European Commission 2007a). In fact, one of the four security fields of the flexibility/security matrix, as developed by Wilthagen and Tros (2004), deals with combination security. Combination security enables employees to combine paid work with other social obligations and responsibilities. In more concrete terms, this refers to a diverse set of leave schemes (maternity, parental and educational), flexible and secure working time arrangements, and reduced-hours schemes – all of which may be subsumed under the heading of transitional labour markets. The flexicurity approach can thus, like the TLM approach, contribute to making transitions between different working-time regimes and between paid and unpaid work smoother and less costly to the individuals concerned, while also lending momentum to the extension and strengthening of rights to paid leave.

## **2 Gender differences in labour market outcomes**

In the following section, gender differences in labour market outcomes will be analysed for the following set of countries, insofar as they represent contrasting

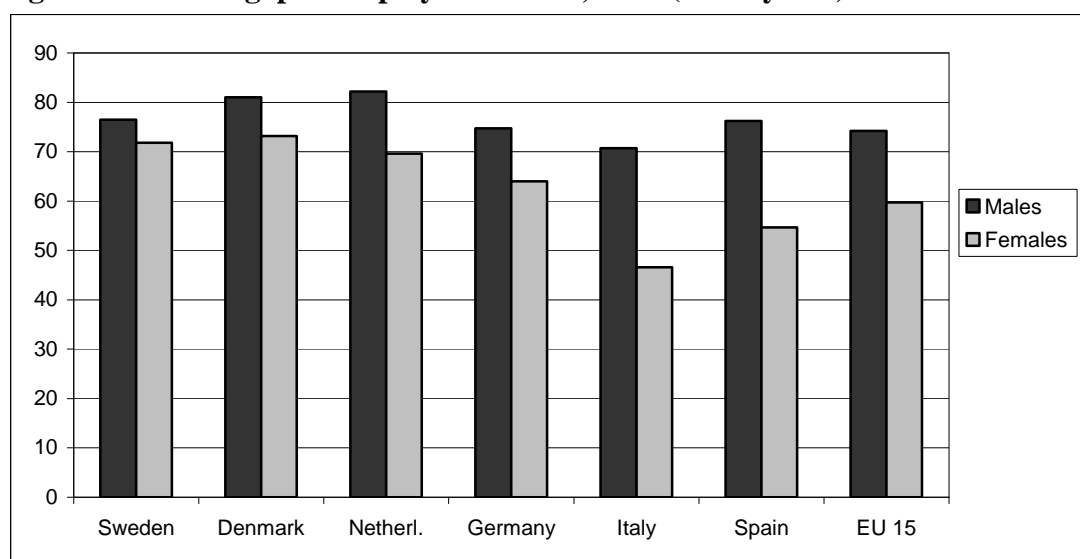


welfare regimes (compare Esping Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996): Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain. The focus will be on employment rates, working time and contract type, equality of pay and division of household tasks. Equal sharing of paid work, money and unpaid time are three of the five dimensions<sup>1</sup> that are stressed by Plantenga *et al.* (2003) in their attempt to construct a gender equality index.

## 2.1 Employment rates

Total employment rates for the 15-64 years age group are lowest in Italy (58.7%) followed by Spain (65.6%), while they are highest in Denmark (77.1) and the Netherlands (76%). The gender gap in employment rates remains large and is most pronounced, by far, in Italy and Spain and least pronounced in Sweden and Denmark. The Netherlands and Germany occupy mid-way positions in this regard (compare Figure 1). Germany and the Netherlands especially, but also Spain and Italy – albeit to a lesser degree – have seen convergence in the employment rates of men and women over the last 20 years. In Denmark and Sweden the employment rates of women have been comparatively high for a long time already. There are strong differences in employment rates regarding education levels and it is particularly noteworthy that women with the highest educational level have far higher employment rates in all countries than those with low education levels.

**Figure 1: Gender gap in employment rates, 2007 (15-64 years)**

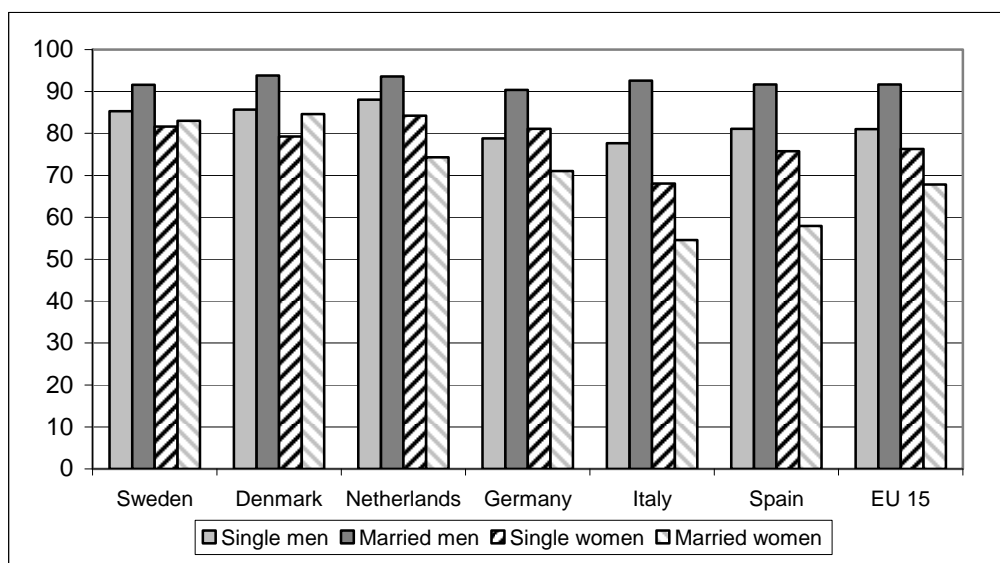


Source: Eurostat 2008 (annual averages).

Figure 2 shows that prime age married men have on average higher employment rates than single men, whereas this is true of married women only in Denmark and Sweden. In all other countries considerable differences between married and single women exist in favour of single women, the difference being largest in Spain and Italy.

**Figure 2: Employment rate differences between single and married men and women, 2006 (25-54 years)**

<sup>1</sup> The other two dimensions are decision-making power and knowledge which are not, or are less clearly, linked to labour market outcomes.



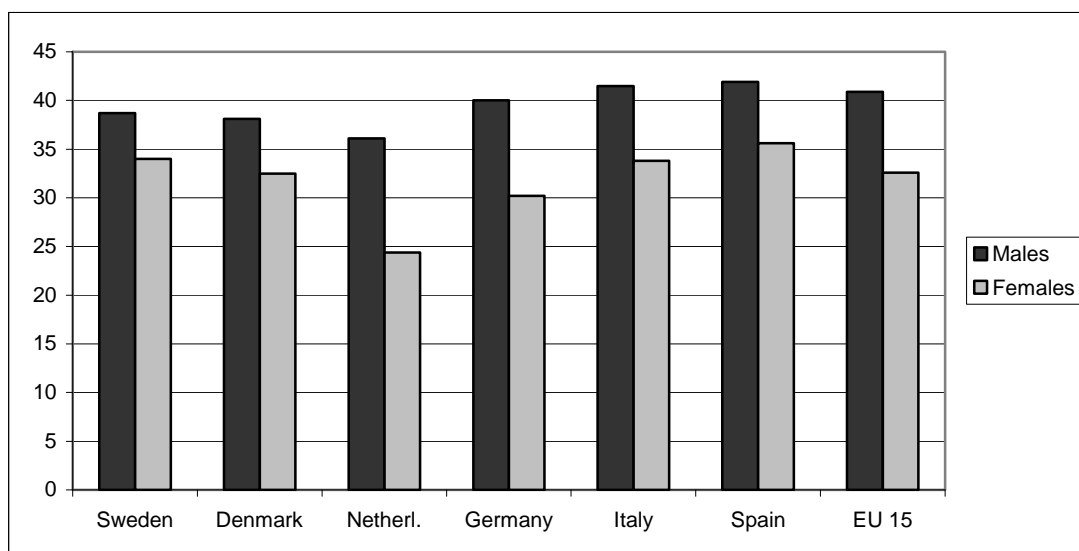
Source: Eurostat 2008 (annual averages).

This finding is also supported by maternal employment rates which are considerably lower than average female employment rates not only in Italy and Spain but also in Germany, while they are in fact higher in Sweden and almost equal in Denmark. The Netherlands perform better than Germany (but worse than the Scandinavian countries) in this respect but, as will be shown below, this is mainly due to part-time employment among women (compare OECD Family Database 2008, LMF2; on the differences between the Netherlands and Germany compare Vlasblom *et al.* 2006). If we look at age-employment profiles of men and women, Sweden and Denmark show consistently low differences in employment rates over the life course. In Germany and the Netherlands, on the other hand, gender differences begin to increase in the 25-29 years segment, whereas the employment rates re-converge again somewhat after the child-bearing years. Italy and Spain show drastic and persistent employment rate differences over the life course (compare OECD Family Database 2008, LMF4).

## 2.2 Working time and division of household tasks

Not only are women less likely to be employed but those who *are* employed are much more likely to work part-time and their average working hours are significantly below those of men. The largest gender differences in working hours are evident in the Netherlands where women work 24.4 hours per week on average and men 36.1 hours (Figure 3). The differences are also large in Germany where women on average work about ten hours per week less than men. Here again, Denmark and Sweden are the best performers with gender differences of about five hours. In Spain and Italy the average working hours of both men and women are comparatively high but this again has to be contrasted with relatively low female employment rates. Only in Denmark and Sweden has equality in working hours increased over the last decade.

**Figure 3: Total average usual working hours and gender gap, 2007**



Source: Eurostat 2008 (annual averages).

In this light, how are household tasks divided between men and women? Table 2 shows how often male and female employees (!) are involved in cooking and housework. Huge gender differences emerge in all countries but Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands also display a much larger involvement of men in household tasks than the other three countries. In all countries but Spain more than 70% of surveyed women state that they are involved in cooking and housework every day for at least one hour, whereas this is true of about 40% of men in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, about 20% of men in Spain and Germany, and 14% of men in Italy. Fewer than 10% of men in Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands respond that they are never, or only once or twice a year, involved in household tasks, whereas this is true of the majority of men in Italy and Spain and of more than one third of German men.

**Table 2: Gender differences in the shares of employees who are involved in cooking and housework, 2005**

	Sweden		Denmark		Netherlands		Germany		Italy		Spain	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Every day for one hour or more	40	72	43	73	40	77	18	71	14	75	22	63
Every day or every second day for less than one hour	28	20	24	19	22	13	16	16	9	7	8	7
Once or twice a week	22	6	19	6	22	5	20	6	14	9	11	9
Once or twice a month	4	2	6	0	6	1	9	1	9	2	7	2
Once or twice a year or never	6	0	7	2	10	4	36	6	54	7	53	18

Source: own table based on European Working Conditions Survey 2005.

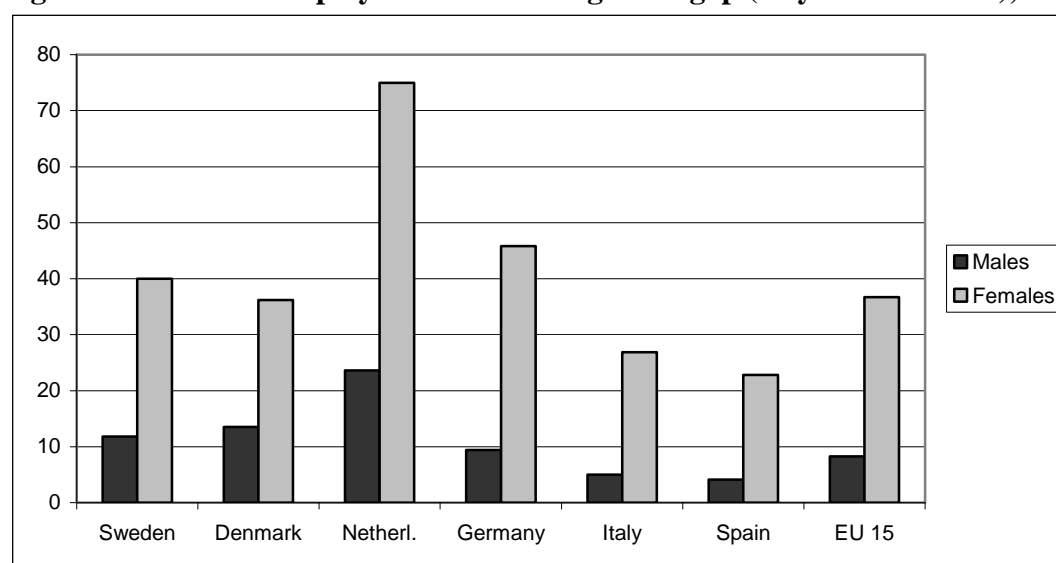
As we were able to see above, the employment rates of women in the Netherlands are close to those of the Scandinavian countries, but 75% of this employment is in fact exercised as part-time work. With an overall part-time employment rate of 46.8%, the Netherlands take the lead in Europe. Germany, Sweden and Denmark also have comparatively high overall part-time employment rates of around 25%. The comparatively low employment rates among women in Spain and Italy especially are

coupled with below average part-time employment rates of 11.8% and 13.6% respectively.

Figure 4 shows that it is predominantly women who work part-time. The Netherlands, with 23.6%, display the highest share of male part-time employment, but the gender difference remains striking and, what is more, men who work part-time are often either students or at the end of their career and hence not providing for a family (Knijn 2001). Sweden and Denmark, which have low gender differences in employment rates, nevertheless show the usual profile of high part-time employment shares among women (around 40% and 36%) and relatively low shares (around 12% and 14%) among men. In Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands improvements have been observed over the last decades in the share of men in part-time employment, whereas in both Spain and Italy part-time employment increased over-proportionally for women. It is important to note that women with lower educational levels are much more likely than women with tertiary education to work part-time.

Sweden and Denmark are the only countries that saw some decline in part-time employment rates of women during the late 1990s and early 2000, while in all other countries part-time employment has increased over the years. This trend of declining part-time employment rates has now come to a halt; in fact, during the last four years the part-time employment rates of women have been growing again in both Sweden and Denmark.

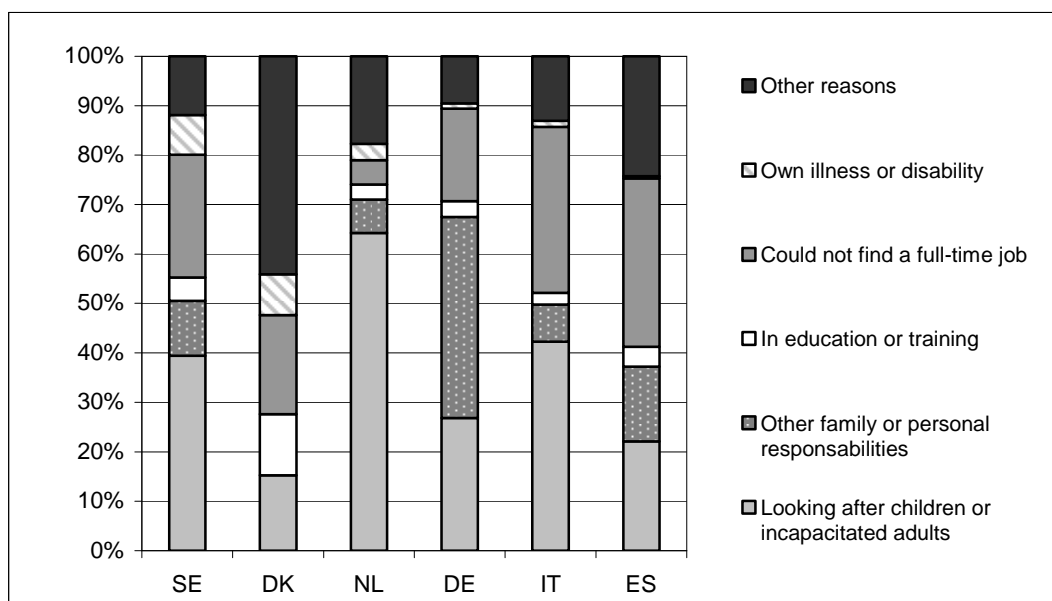
**Figure 4: Part-time employment rates and gender gap (15 years and over), 2007**



Source: Eurostat 2008 (annual averages).

The over-representation of women in part-time work can, to a considerable extent, be attributed to their much stronger engagement in household and care activities. In the Netherlands and Germany about 70% of prime age women state that they work part-time because they look after children or incapacitated adults or because they are engaged in other family or personal responsibilities (Figure 5). This is true of 50% of women in Sweden and Italy, of 37% of women in Spain but of only 15% of women in Denmark (data on other family responsibilities missing).

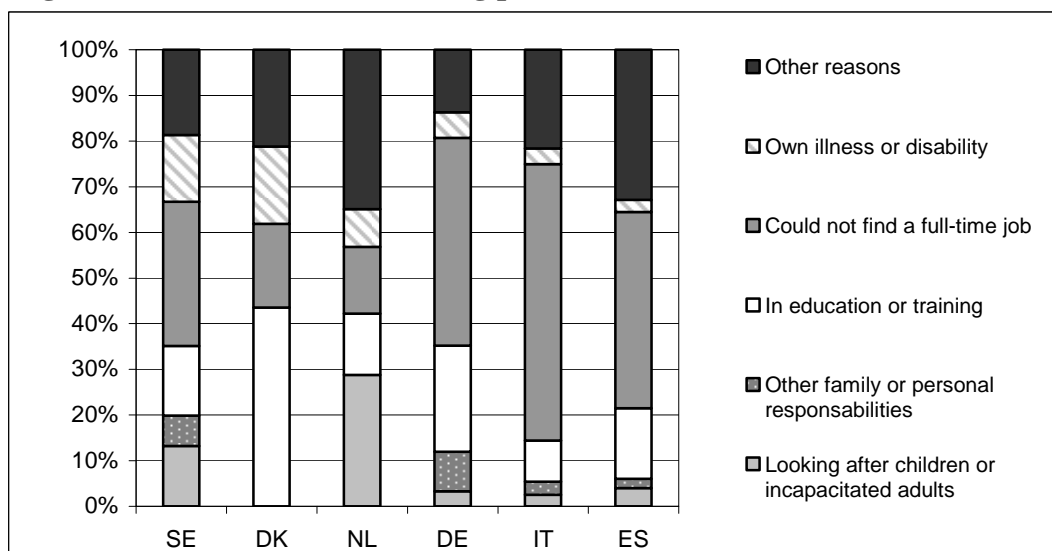
**Figure 5: Main reason for working part-time, women (25-49), 2006**



Note: category “other family or personal responsibility” missing for Denmark.  
Source: Eurostat 2008 (annual averages).

Looking at the same figure for men, it is seen that the share of men working part-time because of care or family responsibilities is marginal except in the Netherlands and Sweden where they make up respectively 29% and 20% of part-time male workers (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Main reason for working part-time, men (25-49), 2006**



Note: category “looking after children or incapacitated adults” missing for Denmark; “other family or personal responsibilities” missing for Denmark and the Netherlands; data for the Netherlands is unreliable.

Source: Eurostat 2008.

What is more, women are not only over-represented in part-time employment but, with the exception of Germany, they are also considerably more likely to work on the basis of a temporary contract making their employment situation more unstable and thus less reliable, a situation that is in turn likely to influence decision-taking within couples (Eurostat 2008, not shown).

## 2.3 The gender pay gap

Women still earn considerably less than men. Not only does this have an effect on their social benefit receipts, such as pensions, but it will also influence important decisions within couples. If, for example, parental leave is unpaid, or is compensated only on a flat-rate basis, it is likely that the partner with the lower earnings will take it up. Among the six countries considered here, the gender pay gap<sup>2</sup> is largest in Germany (22%), followed by the Netherlands (18%). In contrast to other labour market indicators, where Sweden and Denmark perform comparatively well, these two countries display high gender pay gaps of 16% and 17% respectively. In both countries sectoral gender segregation is very much in evidence because it is for the most part women who take over the (caring) tasks that have been outsourced and such work does not usually pay very well. Spain and especially Italy have relatively small gender pay gaps of 13% and 9% respectively, but this is in the context of very low female employment rates. The gender pay gap focuses on hourly earnings and thus does not even take into account the reduced earnings capacities of women due to their predominance in part-time employment. Except for the Netherlands, where the gender pay gap decreased from 23% in 1994 to 18% in 2006, there have been no improvements on this indicator – rather to the contrary (Eurostat 2008, not shown).

## 2.4 Distribution of work in couples

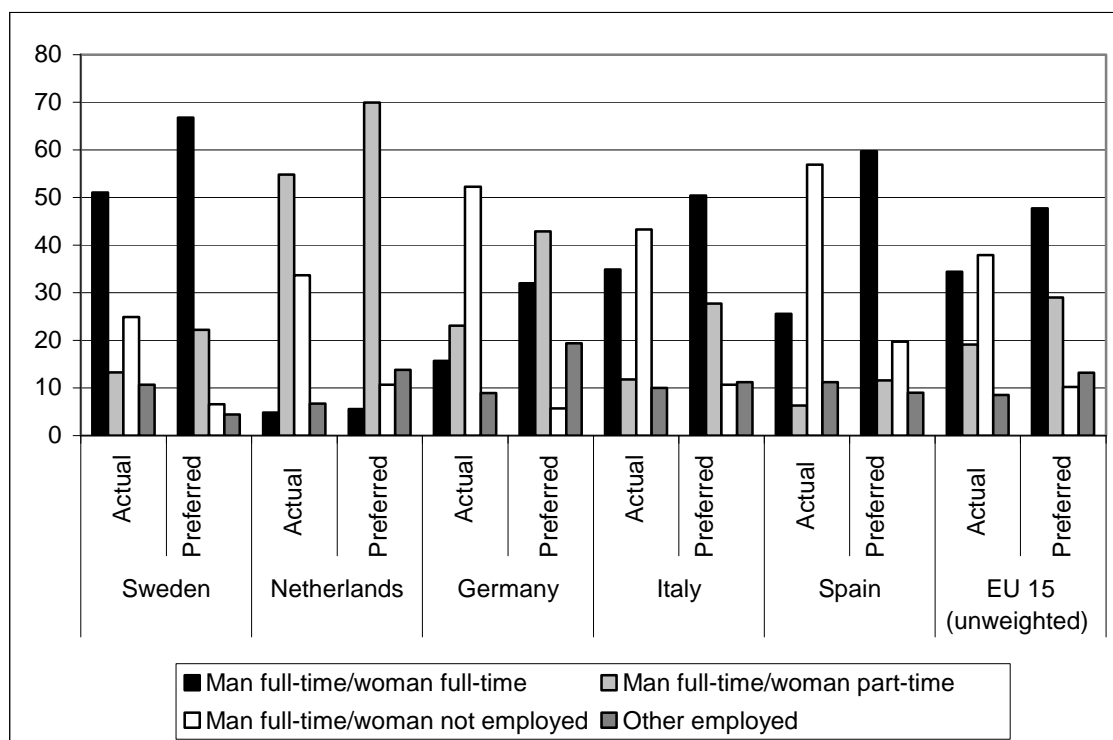
Last but not least, we wish to look at the question of how far men and women are happy with their working patterns. In order to do this, we consider actual and preferred working patterns among couples with children under 6 years (Figure 7). It is especially the potential role of women as mothers that leads to unequal labour market outcomes. For all countries (no data for Denmark is available), we see that the combination of a full-time working man and a non-working woman is much more common in reality than what is wished for. In Germany, Italy and Spain this is in fact the most common working pattern in couples with children under 6. In Sweden the most common pattern is full-time employment of both partners and in the Netherlands full-time employment of the man and part-time employment of the woman.

In Sweden, Italy and Spain, the majority of couples would like both partners to work full-time while in the Netherlands a combination of male full-time work and female part-time work is by far the most preferred option. In Germany the situation is more even, since about 30% of couples would like both partners to work full-time and about 40% prefer the female part-time option.

**Figure 7: Actual and preferred working patterns in couples with children under 6 years, 2001\***

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<sup>2</sup> The gender pay gap is defined as the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.



Note: no data for Denmark.

\* To our knowledge no more up-to-date information on this indicator is available. There is Eurostat data for 2003 on work organisation in couples (with or without children) but it records only actual and not preferred working time. Furthermore, there is no data for either Sweden or Denmark.

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2001, chapter 4, table 4.3.

As can be seen from the above analysis, women are disadvantaged in the labour market in all six countries – least so in Sweden and Denmark and most so in Italy and Spain. Women are less likely to participate in the labour market, more likely to work part-time or hold a temporary contract, and their wages remain on average below the wages of their male counterparts. Furthermore, women employees are considerably more likely to be involved in cooking and household tasks. In a number of indicators, we see some instances of convergence over time but the situation remains far from equal.

### 3. Transitional arrangements between private household activities and employment and within employment

The following condensed institutional analysis will shed some light on policies that can act as transitional labour markets and thus facilitate a more equal participation of women in the labour market. After providing some information on the extent and type of spending on families, the focus will be on childcare, parental leave and flexibility of working time options. Policies in these three areas are usually deemed to be important in facilitating transitions between employment and private activities and within employment (combination security). Whether or not they will contribute to more equal labour market outcomes for women and men will crucially depend on the way they are designed (see Section 1 for a discussion).

Table 3 shows that not only the extent of spending on families but also its structure varies considerably between the six countries under analysis here. Total spending is highest in Denmark and Sweden (3.2% of GDP in both countries). These two countries are followed by Germany, with total spending of 3.0%, and the Netherlands

with 2.3%. Italy and Spain, meanwhile, with only 1.3% and 1.2% of GDP, spend far less on families. In all countries but Germany spending on services – which are known to enhance the labour market opportunities of women – is at least somewhat higher than spending on cash benefits. Tax breaks towards families which tend to favour families with higher income are non-existent in Sweden, Denmark and Italy but relatively important in the Netherlands and especially in Germany. Germany stands out in that it spends twice as much on cash benefits as on services.

**Table 3: Spending on families in cash, services and tax measures (in percentage of GDP), 2005**

	Cash <sup>3</sup>	Services <sup>4</sup>	Tax breaks towards family <sup>5</sup>	Total
<b>Sweden</b>	1.5	1.6	0.0	3.2
<b>Denmark</b>	1.5	1.6	0.0	3.2
<b>Netherlands</b>	0.6	1.0	0.6	2.3
<b>Germany</b>	1.4	0.7	0.9	3.0
<b>Italy</b>	0.6	0.7	0.0	1.3
<b>Spain</b>	0.4	0.7	0.1	1.2
<b>OECD-26</b>	1.3	0.8	0.2	2.3

Note: Public support accounted here relates only to public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas, such as health and housing support, also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here.

Source: OECD Family Database (2009).

### 3.1 Child care – the basic prerequisite for gender equality on the labour market

The most important service to families, and the best guarantee for women to be able to participate equally in the labour market, is clearly care facilities. Due to data limitations on elderly care which is becoming increasingly important in the public debate, the focus will be on childcare only. The availability of childcare places is the primary consideration here, but their affordability and quality are also important.

Figure 8 illustrates the huge differences in the use of public childcare between the two Scandinavian and the other countries. While in both Denmark and Sweden the main type of child-care used by the majority of married couples with children is external child-care services, in all other countries a partner who is living in the household is the most important carer. In Italy and Spain especially, informal services provided by unpaid relatives, neighbours and friends also play a significant role, but in Denmark and Sweden these forms of childcare are of negligible importance.

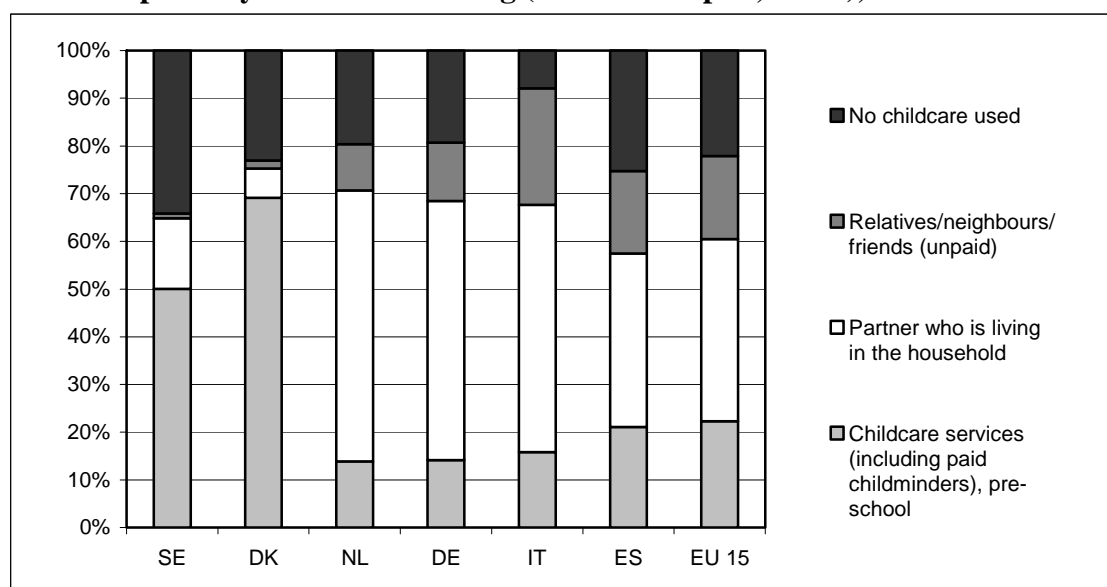
<sup>3</sup> This includes child allowances, public income support payments during periods of parental leave, income support for sole parent families, and public childcare support through earmarked payments to parents.

<sup>4</sup> Direct financing and subsidising of providers of childcare and early education facilities, public spending on assistance for young people and residential facilities, public spending on family services, including centre-based facilities, and home help services for families in need.

<sup>5</sup> Tax expenditures towards families include tax exemptions; child tax allowances, child tax credits, amounts that are deducted from the tax liability. Tax advantages for married people, as existent in for example Belgium, France, Germany and Japan are not included here.



**Figure 8: Main type of childcare used by employed persons for own/spouse's children up to 14 years while working (married couples, 20-49), 2005**



Source: Eurostat 2008.

In fact, if we look at enrolment rates of children in childcare we see that differences are especially large for children under two years while there is no pronounced variation among countries in enrolment rates for children aged between three and five (Table 4). Denmark, with 62%, achieves the highest enrolment rates for young children, followed by Sweden (40%) and the Netherlands (30%). Germany and Italy do especially badly, although in Germany strong differences are found between the East with traditionally high enrolment rates (fostered during the GDR period) and the West with very low enrolment rates. Even though enrolment rates for children aged between three and five are relatively high in all six countries, it must be borne in mind that full-time places are not offered in all countries. Another problem is that out-of-school-hours care schemes for children in pre-schools or primary schools are in most countries still in the early stages of development (OECD 2009, PF15). The two Scandinavian countries here again do best with enrolment rates of young school children in excess of 80%. In the Netherlands the enrolment rate is around 44% (a larger age-range being regarded) whereas in Germany and Spain it is as low as 7% and 4% respectively (no information on Italy).

As concerns affordability, in all six countries a large share of costs, especially for children older than three years, is covered by public funds. For very young children the Netherlands perform worst and Sweden best. With GDP shares of 1.0% and 1.2%, Sweden and Denmark spend by far the largest amounts on childcare and pre-primary education. The shares in the other four countries are around 0.5% of GDP. Another quality indicator is the child-to-staff ratio which seems to be most favourable in Denmark but also relatively good in Sweden and the Netherlands, while it is less favourable in Germany and worst of all in Spain.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The child-to-staff ratio is as follows: 3.3 (0-2 years) and 7.2 (3-5 years) in Denmark; 7.5 (0-2 years) and 12 (3-5 years) in Germany; 7 in Italy; 4 (1 year), 5 (2 years) and 6 (3 years) in the Netherlands; 13.7 (0-2 years) and 25 (3-5 years) in Spain and 5.5 in Sweden (OECD Family Database 2008, PF14 and for DE and SP De Henau 2006, p. 53).

**Table 4: Enrolment rates of children in childcare and out-of-school-hours care (% of respective age group) as well as expenditure on child-care (% of GDP)**

	0-2 years (2004)	3-5 years (2004)	Out-of-school- hours care (2005/2007)	Expenditure on child-care and pre-primary education (2005)
<b>Sweden</b>	39.5	86.6	80.2 (6-8 years)	1.0
<b>Denmark</b>	61.7	89.7	86.2 (6-8 years)	1.2
<b>Netherlands</b>	29.5	70.2	43.7 (4-12 years)	0.5
<b>Germany</b>	9	80.3	7.4 (5-8 years)	0.4
<b>Italy</b>	6.3	100	No information	0.6
<b>Spain</b>	20.7	98.6	3.7 (6-11 years)	0.4

OECD Family Database (2009).

### 3.2 Parental leave, its link to the labour market and involvement of fathers

Parental leave regulations can support a fairer gender division of paid and unpaid work, their benefit not being confined to the specific leave period, but their value in this respect will crucially depend on the way they are designed. If parental leave creates incentives to spend long periods outside the labour market, it can have adverse effects on gender-equal labour market outcomes. According to Bruning *et al.* (1999), three dimensions of parental leave benefits are relevant in this regard: the strength of the relationship with the labour market; the share of men among the average number of leave takers; and the percentage of (female) leave-takers who return to the labour market after the leave period.

Table 4 gives an overview of parental leave legislation in the six countries under analysis. Apart from Germany and Italy, the other four countries all offer paternity leave ranging from two days in Spain and the Netherlands to ten days (two weeks) in Sweden and Denmark. Paternity leave is usually taken around the time of the birth. A more relevant factor in terms of achieving a better gender balance in care work and labour is the question of how far a certain period of the parental leave is reserved for fathers (or the partner who does not take parental leave), as well as the replacement rate.<sup>7</sup> Reserved periods also termed “take-it-or-leave-it” and generous financial compensation are strong incentives for fathers to take over a part of the parental leave. In Sweden and also, since 2007, Germany, two months of the overall period are reserved for the partner who does not take the leave (on Sweden see Pylkkänen and Smith 2004). In Italy one additional month of leave is granted if the father claims at least three months of leave. The other three countries have no take-it-or-leave-it rules.

When it comes to maintaining labour market attachment, systems that link the compensation to the former wage are most beneficial. This is the case in Sweden, Denmark and, since 2007, Germany which grant relatively high shares of the former wage up to a maximum. Italy also links parental benefits to former earnings but the replacement rate is only 30%. In Spain parental leave is unpaid, while in the Netherlands payment depends on favourable collective agreements or civil-servant

<sup>7</sup> A good example of how parental leave can influence and change the gender contract is the Icelandic example. Since 2000 three months of leave each are reserved for mother and father and a further three months can be taken by either of the two or shared. The replacement rate is set at 80% of the monthly wage with, since January 2005, a ceiling at 7,700 euro a month (previously there was no ceiling). According to a study by Gíslason (2007), about 90% of fathers take up this entitlement, taking on average 97 days of leave, while mothers use on average 180 days.

status. In a situation where women are in many couples still the ones who earn less, parental benefits that are linked to the former wage – in contrast to flat-rate benefits or no compensation – can act as an incentive for fathers to take over part of the parental leave, especially if ceilings are high. Furthermore, they provide an incentive to women to participate actively in the labour market before childbirth. In order to avoid discrimination in the recruitment of young women, the parental leave benefit should be paid by the state, or specific collective funds, and not by individual employers.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to uphold labour market attachment also during parental leave. In this regard, flexible parental leave rules that allow combinations of part-time work and leave, or the take up of parts of the leave period when the child is older, are useful. In Sweden parental leave is fully flexible and may be taken in full days, half days or even less (as little as one hour per day). In Germany and Denmark a combination of part-time work and parental leave is possible but will entail reduced payments of parental leave benefits. In Spain too a reduction of daily working time is possible and in the Netherlands (and to a more limited degree in Germany) there is a legal right to a change in working time which also includes the reversibility of this decision (compare Anxo *et al.* 2007).

**Table 4: Parental leave (+maternity/paternity leave)**

	Duration	Age Limit	Payment	Other	Paid father quota	Maternity/paternity leave
<b>SE</b>	480 days to be shared between the parents, 60 days reserved for father or mother, respectively	8	First 390 days: paid according to sickness cash benefit rate (appr. 80% of qualifying income, min. SEK 180 (€20) per day); next 90 days: SEK 60 a day (6.4 Euro)	Parental leave is fully flexible; may be divided in full days, half, ¼, 1/8 (one hour)	60 days	7 weeks at 80% of earnings (min €19 day); 10 days paternity leave
<b>DK</b>	32 weeks per child to be shared (in continuation of maternity/paternity leave) + individual right of 8 unpaid weeks (can spread 32 weeks payment over total 40 weeks leave)	9	Total of 32 weeks 90% up to maximum (DKR 3115 (€418) per week) to be shared.	Possibility to work part-time with reduced payment accordingly		18 weeks at 100% of earnings up to DKR 3115 (€418) per week); 2 weeks paternity leave
<b>NL</b>	3 months per parent per child (6 months if part-time work)	8	Unpaid, except civil servant (75%) or favourable collective agreements	Leave to be taken in blocks of at least one month; legal right to change working time		16 weeks at 100% of earnings; 2 days paternity leave
<b>DE*</b>	12 months, 2 additional months reserved for the partner who does not take the leave	3 (8 if employer agrees)	Minimum of 67% of the net income (at least €300 at most €1800 per month), replacement rate is increased to 100% if net income is less than €1000	Part-time work up to 30 hours possible (but allowance will be reduced accordingly); young siblings bonus of 10% of parental allowance (at least €75)	2 months	14 weeks at 100% of earnings; no paternity leave
<b>IT</b>	10 months, if the father claims at least 3 months, an additional month is	8	30% of earnings	3 months at 30% for self-employed during first year		21 weeks (5 months) at 80% of earnings; paternity leave only if

<sup>8</sup> A noteworthy example in this regard is the 2004 agreement of the Danish social partners on the establishment of a common fund to compensate employers for the financial loss incurred during their employees' parental leave. The contribution to the fund is irrespective of the number of women working in the firm or sector and is thus a solidarity measure that aims to reduce barriers for women in connection with recruitment (Jørgensen 2004).

	granted					mother ill
SP	3 years	3 (6 if part-time)	Unpaid	Reduction of daily working time possible		16 weeks at 100%; 2 days paternity leave (10 weeks of mat. leave can be transferred to father if both parents work)

\*New regulation in place since 1 January 2007. The former regulation included a flat-rate benefit that was not tied to labour market experience and there were no incentives for fathers to take up parental leave.

Sources: European Commission 2007b; OECD Family Database 2009; Gesetz zum Elterngeld und zur Elternzeit 2006.

According to de Henau *et al.* (2008) parental leave take-up rates of fathers were below 5% in Denmark, Germany and Italy; they were 9% in the Netherlands and 75% in Sweden (no information on Spain). So in fact only in Sweden, which makes use of a “paid father quota” of two months, do fathers seem to take up parental leave to a large degree. Nevertheless, the leave periods of Swedish men are on average much shorter than those of Swedish women – in 2002 they accounted for only 16% of the total days claimed, an average of 9.6 days per father (de Henau 2006). In this regard, it is noteworthy that in Germany the share of fathers taking parental leave increased – from 3.5% before the introduction of the new parental leave benefit that includes a “paid father quota” in January 2007 – to 16% in 2008. However, in two thirds of the cases fathers used only a short leave period of one or two months (BMFSFJ 2008).

According to a 2003 Eurobarometer survey, the majority of men are well aware of their right to take parental leave – the shares range from 65% in Italy to 97% in Sweden. The share of men that responded that they had not taken or were not thinking of taking parental leave was smallest, by far, in Sweden, with only 33%. The shares in all other countries exceeded 70% (DK: 70%, NL: 79%; DE: 90%; IT: 87%; ES: 95%). 18% of the men not having taken or not thinking of taking parental leave stated that they could not afford to do so – these figures were particularly high in Germany (31%).<sup>9</sup> On average 14% stated that their wife/partner did not work (as high as 25% and 23% in Italy and Spain) and 14% stated that parental leave is more for women – ranging from 1% in Sweden and 3% in Italy to 25% in Germany.

### 3.3 Working time flexibility

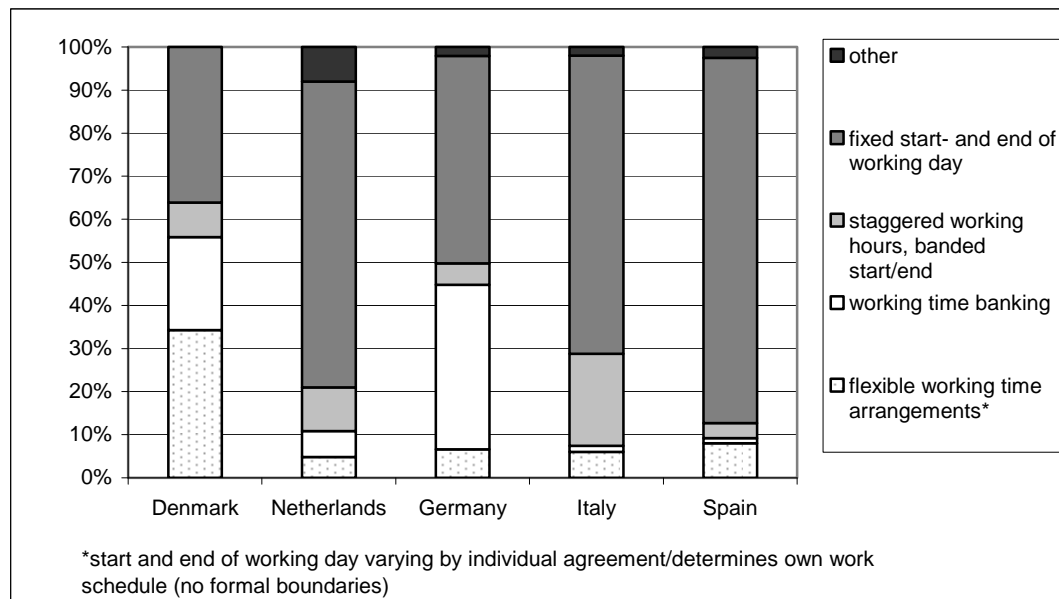
In order to allow more equal labour market participation for men and women, regardless of family circumstances, available and affordable quality childcare and work-focused and equality-enhancing parental leave policies are not the only important factors, for an important role is also played by the possibility of working time flexibility. In this regard, the crucial question is which of the partners will make use of the flexible working time options even if they are available for both men and women.

Large country variations are to be observed in the flexibility of working time regulations, as shown by Figure 9 for prime-age women. The most flexible working time regulations exist in Denmark, followed by Germany, and the least flexible ones in Spain. Indeed, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain all have very inflexible working time regulations (no data for Sweden).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Multiple answers were possible.

<sup>10</sup> The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) includes a question on flexibility of working time arrangements (q17a). Sweden, with 34%, followed closely by the Netherlands, records the lowest

**Figure 9: Working time regulations of dependent employed prime-age (25-49) women, 2004**



Note: the distribution of working time regulations is very similar for prime-age men in the respective countries but at somewhat higher levels of working time flexibility.

Source: Eurostat 2007.

About 70% of women and somewhat fewer men have a fixed start and end of the working day in Italy and the Netherlands and the share is as high as 85% in Spain. Working time regulations in these countries are thus very inflexible and presumably make it more difficult to combine work and family tasks. It has to be noted, however, that in the Netherlands much of this inflexibility is offset by the strong prevalence of part-time work (especially among women). The share of employees with inflexible working hours is much lower in Germany, at around 45%, and particularly in Denmark, at around 35%. While Germany uses working-time banking (working time accounts) to a considerable degree, making less use of individually agreed or non-formal flexible working time arrangements, Denmark uses a combination of both forms. Working-time accounts are widely used in Germany and the Nordic countries (Anxo *et al.* 2006). According to Seifert (2007), the use of working-time accounts in Germany has increased rapidly over the past ten years. However, the working-time accounts often have a compensation period of a maximum of one year and the account is not automatically transferable between companies. In Sweden and Denmark it is standard practice to save overtime for time off. However, it is not always clear whether working-time accounts are actually beneficial to the work-life balance, insofar as they allow the employer, to some extent, to adapt working time to company production needs, so that the control of time is not always in the hands of the

share of workers who have very inflexible working hours and, at about 60%, the highest share of workers with relatively flexible working hours. The next best performers in this regard are the Netherlands and Denmark with outcomes around 50%. The comparability of this question with the Eurostat question used in Figure 9 is limited, however, because in the EWCS Germany comes out as the most inflexible in terms of work arrangements (Eurofound 2008).

Similarly, Sweden does best in the Establishment survey on working time and work-life balance (ESWT) with 73% of its workers being employed in companies that offer the option of flexible working time (the shares range from 42% in Italy to 63% in Germany) (Eurofound 2008).

employee. Furthermore, the gender aspect is also rather ambiguous as long-term time accounts will be used differently by men and women, as can be seen to be the case today with leave credits. Women use the possibility to take time off to satisfy family care commitments, while men use the possibility to leave the labour market close to the retirement age, hence treating it as an early retirement arrangement.

It is interesting to note that in all countries working time regulations seem to be somewhat more flexible for men than for women, even though women are much more likely to make use of such regulations. This result is also supported by the variable on flexibility or inflexibility of working time arrangements in the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).<sup>11</sup>

#### **4. Gender differences in the labour market and institutional responses – some conclusions**

To sum up, the most successful countries in terms of women's continuous labour market participation – Sweden and Denmark – offer a whole range of transitional arrangements to ease the combination of work and private activities. Spain and Italy, the countries with the worst outcomes in regard to equal labour market participation of women and men, offer the fewest transitional arrangements. The Netherlands and Germany occupy a mid-way position.

Interestingly, Denmark and Sweden, in their efforts to achieve high labour market equality, pursue slightly different strategies from one another. While Sweden offers relatively long parental leave that is well paid, can be combined with work in a flexible way and provides a leave period that is reserved for the other parent (usually the father), Denmark's parental leave system is designed in a more traditional way without reserved periods for fathers. In this country, however, the enrolment rates of very small children in day care are exceptionally high and working time regulations are very flexible, allowing parents to combine work and caring more easily. Information on this indicator is missing for Sweden but results from other data sources point to very flexible working time regulations in Sweden too. Sweden also displays high enrolment rates in childcare for very small children and, in both countries (unlike in the other four countries), couples are much more likely to use external childcare facilities as the main form of provision, instead of the care services of one of the parents (usually the mother). This is also reflected in both countries' high expenditure on services, their well-above-average GDP share on childcare and pre-primary education, and their relatively favourable child-to-staff ratio as an indicator of the quality of the childcare provided. Both countries thus offer a continuum of flexible and comprehensive support to parents (compare also OECD 2002 and 2005). Furthermore, the difference in average working hours between men and women is one of the lowest among the countries analysed in this article. In spite of these comparatively positive outcomes, both countries still make relatively high use of part-time employment among women, with high average hours, this being more the case in Sweden than in Denmark. Large sectoral division is evident and the gender pay gap remains above the European average, albeit at a level lower than in the Netherlands and Germany.

Germany and the Netherlands stand in the middle – both countries have female employment rates that are well above the EU15 average – but the gender difference in employment rates is larger than in Denmark and Sweden and, unlike in the latter two

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<sup>11</sup> The question asked in the EWCS is the following: How are your working time arrangements set?

countries, we see the typical downward trend in employment rates of married women as compared to single ones. Furthermore, in Germany many women in couples with children under six do not work at all. Employment rates in the Netherlands are higher than in Germany and, importantly, the effect of young children on the overall labour market participation of women is much less pronounced. But the large majority of Dutch women work part-time and women in the Netherlands have by far the lowest average working hours. To sum up, the Netherlands achieve some degree of gender equality through very high part-time employment shares and reasonable enrolment rates of very small children, though at a relatively high cost. The strategy to use female part-time employment in this way can be called into question insofar as it does not substantially modify the gender contract. In fact, the earnings capacity of women is strongly reduced, as is their entitlement to social security and especially earnings-related pension benefits, so that they lack independence from their partners. Germany, on the other hand, seems to achieve larger gender equality in the labour market than the Mediterranean countries through relatively high flexibility in working time arrangements. Furthermore, the new parental leave rules which actively involve fathers can be expected to contribute in the longer run to a further improvement of gender equality in the labour market. Germany still fares very badly on childcare provision for very young children and schoolchildren but some recent political decisions should bring improvements in this regard in the near future. Furthermore, Germany still uses tax advantages for married couples and derived social security rights, for example in health care, which favour constellations in which only one partner is working in a regular job. Such a situation can be seen as highly counter-productive to a more equal distribution of work and household tasks between men and women.

Spain and especially Italy fair worst by far. Admittedly their gender pay gap and female part-time employment rates appear relatively low, but this goes hand in hand with female employment rates far below the EU15 average. In fact, marriage has an over-proportional effect on gender differences in employment rates and both countries show drastic and persistent employment rate differences over the life course. This is not surprising considering the scant importance accorded to the provision of transitional arrangements, as discussed above, in both of these countries. Expenditure on families is well below average. As in the Netherlands and Germany, the bulk of the childcare used by married couples is not in the form of childcare services but of a partner living in the household or wider networks of family and friends. Enrolment rates in childcare of very young children are extremely low in Italy, while in Spain they are actually higher than in Germany and similarly deficient for schoolchildren. The share of costs covered by public funds is also quite reasonable in Spain, but the quality of childcare is low if measured by the indicator of child-to-staff ratio. Parental leave regulations are deficient in both countries, with very weak links to the labour market in Italy and no links at all in Spain (i.e. no financial compensation). The Italian regulation includes incentives for participation by fathers since 1999 but the rule is less direct than in the Swedish and German cases and the very low financial compensation may have contributed to the fact that parental leave is hardly taken up by Italian fathers. Both countries have very inflexible working time regulations and a high hours' culture among those who work – Italy, again, faring slightly better here with a larger share of staggered working hours or banded start and end times.

Coming back to the different models of gender division of labour as depicted in Table 1, it has to be concluded that all six countries are very far from having achieved gender equality in the labour market and in the household sphere in accordance with the dual earner/dual carer model devised by Crompton and Le Feuvre. Sweden and

Denmark come closest to the dual earner/substitute carer model but they surely have not achieved a dual earner/dual carer model. In fact, relatively large shares of women are still engaged in part-time work and the drop in this share seems to have come to a halt. Men are more likely to contribute to household tasks and cooking than in Spain, Italy and Germany but the gender distribution is nevertheless far from equal. Germany and the Netherlands display a more traditional gender division of labour consisting of the dual earner/female part-time carer (substituted in Germany, to some extent, by female carer) model. Important differences between these two countries are that the enrolment of very small children in childcare is considerably higher in the Netherlands and that Dutch men are much more likely to participate regularly in household and cooking tasks, with Germany being, in this regard, closer to Spain and Italy. Spain and especially Italy still make strong use of the male breadwinner/female carer model, with gender differences in employment rates remaining large, and in evidence over the whole life course, and hardly any men taking – or considering taking – parental leave, and the majority of men never – or almost never – participating in household tasks and cooking.

It is interesting to note that the countries with a more traditional gender division of labour – Italy, Spain but also Germany – have very low fertility rates, whereas the countries that apply a less traditional gender division of labour, namely Sweden and Denmark, are among those with the highest fertility rates in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The Netherlands, with its strong application of the dual earner/female part-time carer model, achieves fertility rates that are closer to those of the Scandinavian countries than to those of Germany and the Mediterranean countries. In fact, unlike in the 1980s, there is nowadays a positive relationship between women's labour market participation and fertility rates (OECD 2007: 35).

Another element that distinguishes the organisation of social policies from a gender perspective, and which it is thus important to stress when analysing the TLM concept, is the use of derived rights. Extensive use of derived rights in the tax and social security systems reflects the vision of the breadwinner model, where the provision goes beyond income to encompass also social security rights, e.g. health care, pensions, and unemployment benefits. It may be argued that the existence of derived rights reinforces the traditional division of labour by blurring the need for more specifically targeted measures (e.g. better availability of childcare, improved guarantees of flexible working time arrangements, etc.) to modify and improve the labour market situation of women. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to consider this aspect in depth, the six countries analysed make a very different use of derived rights. Denmark and Sweden have, little by little over the past 20-30 years, done away with the derived rights and instead put in place individualised rights that reflect the vision of a dual-earner model, e.g. in Denmark the survivor's pension has been abolished and the Netherlands have made some steps in the same direction. However, the use of derived rights in Germany, Spain and Italy is extensive, reflecting the vision of the traditional family model, e.g. in Germany small part-time work does not give entitlement to most social security benefits.

## Conclusions with regard to TLM

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<sup>12</sup> The fertility rates are as follows: 1.85 in Sweden, 1.83 in Denmark, 1.7 in the Netherlands, 1.32 in Germany, 1.32 in Italy and 1.35 in Spain (OECD Family Database 2008).



In its current form, the TLM approach addresses primarily the issue of how to secure labour market or life-course flexibility in order to ensure a win-win situation for both employers and employees. The question of how paid and unpaid work is and should be divided between men and women, and how institutions can contribute to this goal, is much less central. To merely provide secure transitions and flexibility that enables women to combine paid and unpaid work can contribute to reinforcing stereotypes and even exacerbating existing gender gap(s). This is a perspective rarely accorded much attention in current academic research and policy debates (Jepsen 2005, 2006, 2008).

Of prime importance in the future will be a scenario whereby women are enabled to have continuous careers and men discontinuous careers. To this end it is necessary to establish a more general framework designed to facilitate negotiations on how to allow for variations and fluctuations in working time over a shorter or longer period of an individual's working life. Establishing these rights will have to involve both the state and the social partners and it requires a global rather than a local approach in order to allow for equity and to guarantee the transfer of rights. However, the actual application and adaptation of these rights in practice would demand a more local approach, one able to take into account the specific circumstances of different companies and individuals. However, providing new or more rights is not devoid of implications for gender equality. Certain prerequisites should be met to ensure that gender equality is not undermined, and that a shift in work culture and norms actually takes place.

There is a definite need to move towards the individualisation of social security rights and taxation, as individual choices in the labour market should be accompanied by individual rights (Esping-Andersen *et al.* 2002; Jepsen *et al.* 1997; Klammer 2000; Leschke 2008; Schmid 2001). This is particularly important when developing the framework of transitional labour markets which is very much based on the concept of entitlement to certain facilities that make it easier to cope with labour market transitions of various types. New rights to vary working time over shorter or longer periods must be individual rights, and the same should apply to all other rights granted in the context of social security and tax systems. The failure to individualise rights means that second earners will continue to be penalised, increasing the incentive to refrain from engaging in paid work.

Rights to child- and elderly care should also be granted, as part of combination security, on an individualised basis. Such rights would enable women and men to take control of their work/life balance. Internal flexibility cannot do away with the need for care but it can complement it. The right to full-time childcare will make it neither possible nor desirable for all women to work full-time but it will make it easier for men and women to negotiate and distribute the remaining unpaid work between them.

It is also important to draw attention to the need for generous (and preferably earnings-related) replacement rates for various care-leave schemes, since a genuine TLM approach should also contain provision for income security. A generous replacement rate, furthermore, is a prerequisite for more widespread use of these rights by men. However, in order to provide incentives and signals to men that they should engage in unpaid work, a part of care-leave schemes – especially of parental leave – should be exclusively reserved for them. In the longer run, this will also help to change general attitudes to the gender division of labour and care work. Only by including men in unpaid work, and hence redistributing the responsibilities of unpaid care work between men and women, will women have a genuinely free choice with regard to paid work.

How can we create an environment which provides for such genuinely free choices, rather than choices restricted by in-built constraints (e.g. part-time work might be the only feasible “choice” in a long-working-hours culture)? This question should be at the heart of the TLM approach, not only with regard to the need to combine family and work but in relation to all the numerous transitions inherent in the ways men and women work and conduct their lives.

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